

God Hasn't Given Up On Me, Part 3 - Romans 11:16-24 – October 28th, 2012

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series I've titled; "God Hasn't Given Up On Me."
- Once again, I'm deeming it necessary to quickly go through what we have seen thus far, as it will be very germane to our understanding.
- Romans chapter eleven is one of those chapters in which we need the entire context in order to grasp the bigness of what is recorded in it.

1. In spite of how bad I've been (Verse 1)

- In spite of the fact Paul persecuted Christians, many of whom were killed as martyrs because of their profession of faith he wasn't rejected.

2. Regardless of who's against me (Verses 2-4)

- In spite of Elijah's prayer in stopping the rain from coming down, he couldn't pray against Israel stopping God's blessing from coming down.

3. Even if I've rejected Him (Verses 5-10)

- In spite of the hardening of the Jews hearts and the blindness of their eyes in rejecting their true Messiah, God does not in turn reject them.

4. Even if I think God rejected me (Verses 11-15)

- In spite of thinking that God had rejected the Jews in envying His favoring of the Gentiles, God still grafts them in with the Gentiles as well

5. Because it's not about me (Verses 16-19)

(16) If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. (17) If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, (18) do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. (19) You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in."

-v16 Paul says if the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy the whole batch is holy and if the root is holy, then so too are the branches.

-v17 He says if some branches are broken off and though as a wild olive shoot are grafted in among others, you share in the nourishing sap.

-v18-19 He says don't boast over those branches, you don't support the root the root supports you; they broke off so you could be grafted in.

- While I'm keenly aware these verses are riddled with symbolism, I hope we'll all give the Holy Spirit permission to teach us what it means.

- First and foremost we need to know what's meant by the, firstfruits, being holy. Some commentators believe it's speaking of the patriarchs.

- Others believe these "first-fruits" are speaking of the first church made up of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. I think it speaks to both.

- Here's how I get there, both the patriarchs and the early church, have had the affect of sanctifying the whole batch because of their roots.

- The reason I say that is because of this reference to Numbers 15, where the Israelites firstfruits given to the Lord would sanctify the rest.

- That's not to say that all Israel though rejecting Christ are automatically saved having this firstfruit root, rather, it's God grafts them back in.

- Let me explain, in Israel, in that day, when an old olive tree had lost its vigor, they would have to cut off the branches that weren't fruitful.

- Subsequent to this pruning, they would then graft in some wild olive shoots, which in turn would reinvigorate the olive tree making it fruitful.

- It's interesting to note, we have this ever so beautifully displayed with Ruth who, as a "Moabite," was a godly shoot engrafted into Israel.

- This is where the Gentile comes into this amazing scripture picture. Like Ruth, we as the Gentiles are that wild olive shoot that's grafted in.

- Just as the Gentile provokes the Jew to jealousy drawing them back in, so too does the wild branch of the Gentile graft the Jew back in.

- Now, this can create a problem in the sense the Gentiles may begin to fancy themselves as having been accepted and the Jew rejected.

One commentator, concerning the Gentile Christian said it best this way; "It is a matter for profound regret that just as Israel refused to accept this salvation when it was offered to them, so the Gentiles have all too often refused to make Israel envious. Instead of showing to God's ancient people the attractiveness of the Christian way Christians have characteristically treated the Jews with hatred, prejudice, persecution, malice, and all uncharitableness. Christians should not take this passage calmly."

- This explains why Paul would go to great lengths to explain that there's nothing wrong with this firstfruit root. It's not about those grafted in.

- Perhaps better said, we don't support the root, the root supports us, and as such, we in no way can boast. It's not due to anything we did.

- Absent this Jewish root, we as Gentiles would not exist. While the Jewish root can exist without us, we in turn cannot exist without the root.

6. Because of God's kindness (Verses 20-24)

(20) Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. (21) For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. (22) Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. (23) And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. (24) After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

-v20-21 He says they're broken off by unbelief so don't be arrogant, be afraid. God didn't spare natural branches, He'll not spare you either.

-v22-23 He says God's sternness is to those who fall; His kindness is to those who do not persist in unbelief, as God will graft them in again.

-v24 He says, if those cut out of an olive tree wild by nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree how much more will the natural ones be.

- Like the passage before it this too seems riddled with symbols that will once again require us to give the Holy Spirit permission to sort it out.

- In order to understand what Paul is saying, we may do well to first understand what it is that Paul is not saying concerning ones salvation.

- Paul isn't saying we can be cut off and lose our salvation rather, what he is saying is we can cut ourselves off, if we do what the Jew did.

- In other words, if we reject God's kindness, refusing to continue in His kindness then we as Gentiles will also be cut off as were the Jews.

- The reason for this is, if it's not due to kindness, then it will become our arrogance, in that we'll believe we're so good as to not be cut off.

- In addition to this, Paul is sort of taking it a step further and saying that it's easier to keep the Jews grafted in than it is to graft Gentiles in.

- This is where and how I'd like to close. If the onus is on me, and God's kindness to me, is about me, then I'll think God is through with me.